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Section 1 – Introduction

Preface

1.1 The Interim Evaluation was completed in June 2003 and presented to the Programme Committee at the meeting held in October 2003. Following this meeting, it was requested that a Second Interim Evaluation Report should be produced that provides an update on the progress that has been made by the Direct Grants Programme in relation to the issues identified in the initial study. This report details the progress achieved during the period to 31st December 2003. It also provides an outline of the arrangements in relation to the Final Evaluation that will report on the overall impact of the programme against the agreed targets.

Scope of Work

1.2 The focus for the second Interim Evaluation has been as follows:

- *Progress Review* – Undertake a review of the progress that has been made by the Direct Grants Programme for the period to 31st December 2003.
- *Review of Operational Issues* – Undertake a review of the operational issues identified in the Interim Evaluation and report on how these matters have been addressed.
- *Programme Impact* – Review the progress that is being made in relation to the programme targets and review the arrangements for the final evaluation that will report on the overall impact.

Methodology and Approach

1.3 This Second Interim Evaluation has been based on the following:

- *Information Gathering and Analysis* – This has included undertaking a detailed review of the information available on the programme activity for the period to 31st December 2003.
- *Consultation Meetings* – A number of meetings have been held with programme staff on the progress of Direct Grants and the arrangements for gathering information on completed projects.
- *Final Evaluation Arrangements* – Consideration has also been given to the arrangements for the Final Evaluation. This has included the design of a post completion questionnaire that will be used to gather additional data on the impact of the programme.

Structure of the Report

1.6 The report has been structured as follows:

Section 1 – Introduction

This section of the report outlines the scope of work undertaken for the Second Interim Evaluation and approach used for the study.

Section 2 – Review of Programme Activity

Provides an overview of the programme performance for the period to 31st December 2003.

Section 3 – Evaluation Findings

This section outlines the main findings from the evaluation and comments on the progress to date.

Section 4 – Final Evaluation and Conclusion

Outlines the arrangements for the final evaluation and the conclusions of the report.

Acknowledgements

1.7 MCM Associates would like to record our appreciation to everyone who has assisted with the Second Interim Evaluation. This support has been extremely important and has enabled the evaluation to be completed within the required timescales.

Section 2 – Review of Programme Activity

Overview

2.1 From the commencement of the programme until 31 December 2003, Direct Grants Programme has awarded 282 grants worth a total of £2,240,356.¹

2.2 A comparison with the overarching targets for the programme over its two year life as follows:

	<i>Actual To Date</i>	<i>Target</i>	<i>Actual as % of target</i>
Number of Successful Grant Applications	282	380	74%
Total value of Grants (£)	£2,240,356	£3,200,000	70%
Average Grant Award (£)	£7,973	£8,421	

Current Progress

2.3 The number of applications being considered at the time of the evaluation is also pertinent. It has been advised that a further 22 applications with a value of £205,020 have been approved during the period between the 31st December 2003 – 3rd February 2004.

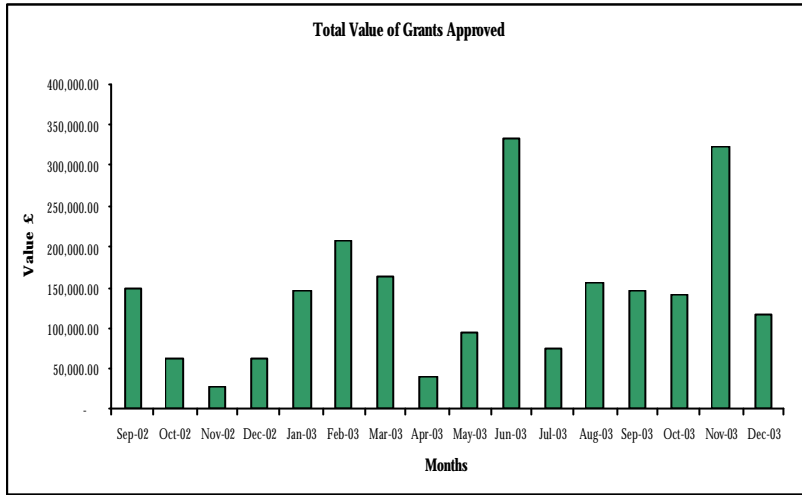
2.4 A further 57 applications with a total value of £616,398 are pending. If these are approved, the programme will have achieved 95% of the spend target and project target. It should be noted that £77,503 has been decommitted leaving a balance to be allocated of £215,729. Based on this information, it is expected that the fund will be fully committed by the end of March 2004.

	No.	Value
Approved Projects as at 31 st December 2003	282	£2,240,356
Approved Projects as at 3 rd February 2004	304	£2,445,376
Awaiting Approval	57	£616,398
Total Recommendations		£3,061,774
Decommitted		£77,503
Total Commitment		£2,984,271
Grant Fund		£3,200,000
Remaining Fund		£215,729

¹ This information is based on information provided by the Direct Grants Programme Team in January 2004 and covers the period from the commencement of the programme

Value of Grants Awarded

2.5 The total value of grant payments and the number of approved applications is summarised as follows:



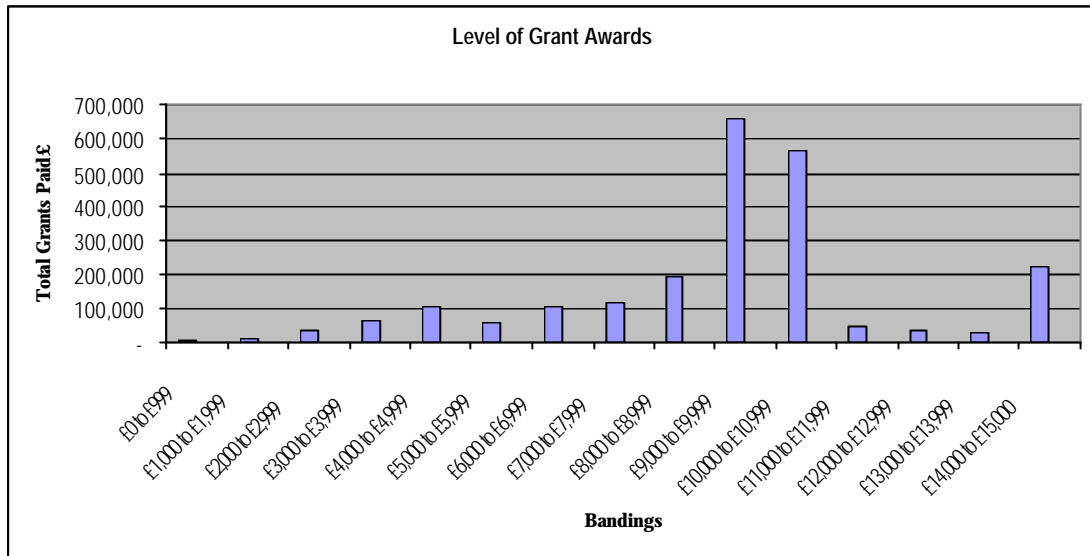
Month	£
Sep-02	149,908
Oct-02	61,896
Nov-02	26,870
Dec-02	62,550
Jan-03	144,393
Feb-03	206,630
Mar-03	164,086
Apr-03	39,432
May-03	95,490
Jun-03	333,959
Jul-03	74,311
Aug-03	155,425
Sep-03	145,522
Oct-03	139,351
Nov-03	324,258
Dec-03	116,273
£2,240,356	

2.6 It can be observed that the level of grant awards has been reasonably consistent over the last six months with the exception of June and November. This would seem to be due to the work that was undertaken to take applications to LSG meetings for determination to clear the backlog. It is also noted that the number of applications has been maintained over the Christmas period and into the New Year.

Level of Grants Awarded

2.7 The grants awarded have ranged from £880 to £15,000. An analysis of this is illustrated below:

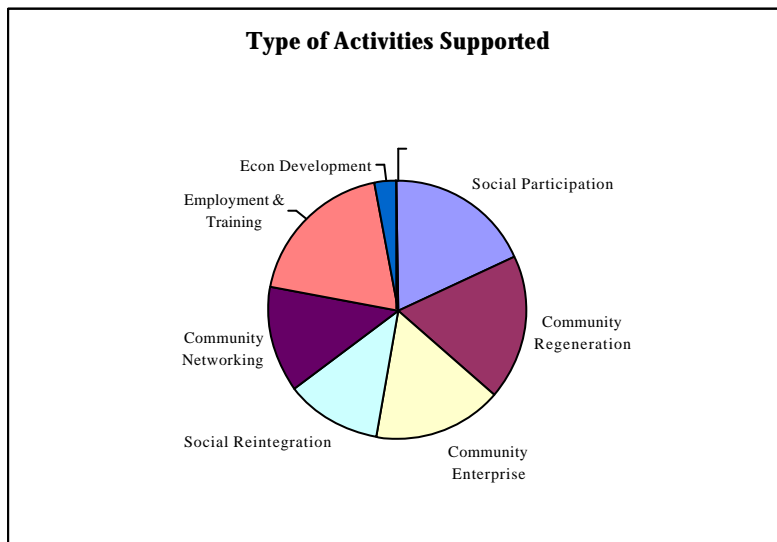
Band	Total Paid	No.
£0 to £999	4,569	6
£1,000 to £1,999	8,388	6
£2,000 to £2,999	37,940	15
£3,000 to £3,999	60,371	18
£4,000 to £4,999	106,224	24
£5,000 to £5,999	58,112	11
£6,000 to £6,999	103,369	16
£7,000 to £7,999	113,077	15
£8,000 to £8,999	194,053	23
£9,000 to £9,999	657,427	68
£10,000 to £10,999	564,420	56
£11,000 to £11,999	45,551	4
£12,000 to £12,999	37,368	3
£13,000 to £13,999	26,570	2
£14,000 to £15,000	222,918	15
	£ 2,240,356	282



2.8 The analysis indicates that of the majority of the grants awarded (52%) are between £8,000 and £11,000. The average grant award is £7,975 which reflects a slight increase from the initial evaluation.

Activities Supported

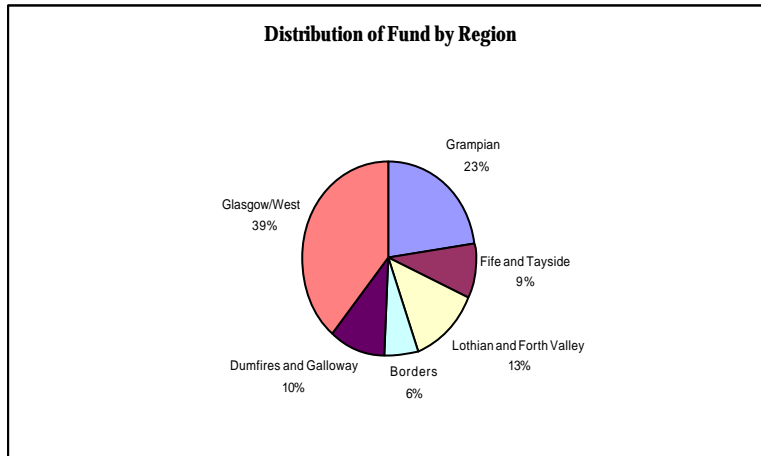
2.9 A summary of the activities supported is set out as follows:



2.10 It can be observed that a broad range of activities have continued to be supported and these include childcare activity, capacity building, employment and training initiatives and economic development initiatives.

2.11 Regional Distribution of Grants

A summary of the distribution of the grant fund across the regions is set out as follows:



Grampian	506,283
Fife and Tayside	201,914
Lothians and Forth Valley	287,217
Borders	141,323
Dumfries and Galloway	233,756
Glasgow/West	869,864
	£2,240,356

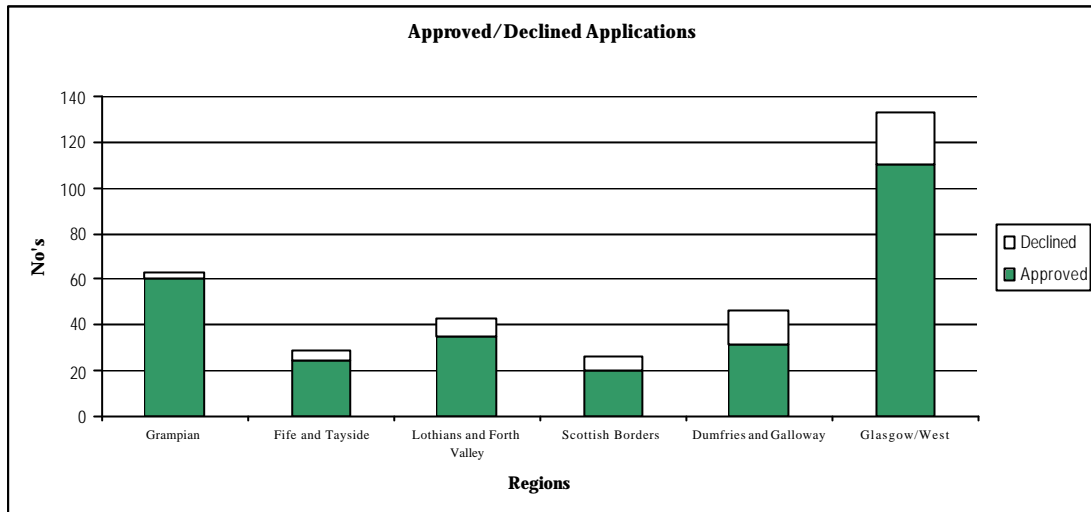
2.12 The uptake pattern across the regions shown in the Interim Evaluation in June 2003 has broadly remained the same as can be shown from the following analysis which compares the regional spends in June 2003 and December 2003.

	-----Grant Allocation %-----		
	June 03	December 04	Movement
Grampian	22%	23%	+1%
Fife and Tayside	10%	9%	-1%
Lothians and Forth Valley	10%	13%	+3%
Borders	7%	6%	-1%
Dumfries and Galloway	8%	10%	+2%
Glasgow/West	43%	39%	-4%
	100%	100%	

Grant Approval Rates

2.13 An analysis has been carried out which compares, on a regional basis, the total applications received with the number that was subsequently approved. The results of this analysis indicates that an improvement has been achieved in those areas that had previously lower approval rates.

Area	Approved	Declined	Approval %
Grampian	60	3	95%
Fife and Tayside	25	4	86%
Lothians and Forth Valley	35	8	81%
Scottish Borders	20	6	77%
Dumfries and Galloway	32	14	70%
Glasgow/West	110	23	83%
	282	58	83%



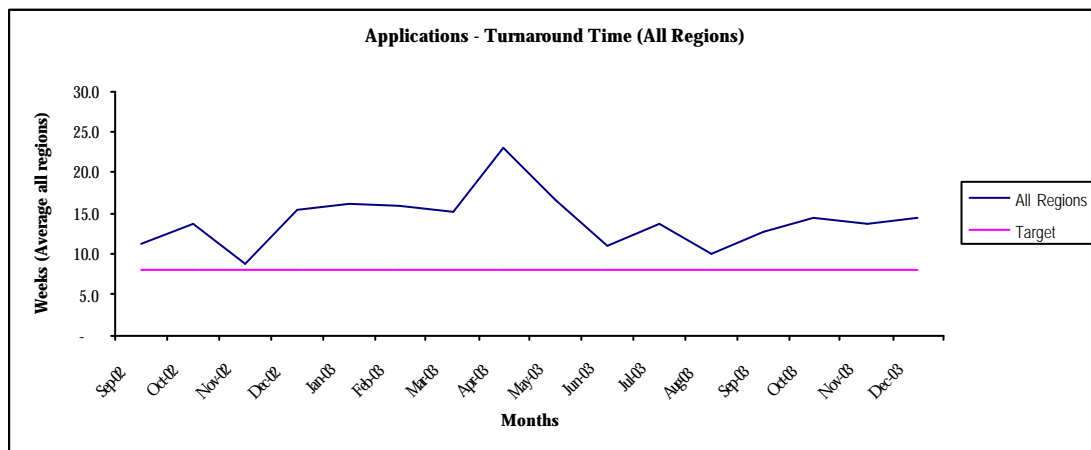
Turnaround Time Analysis

2.14 When Direct Grants was established, a target of 8 weeks was set for the processing of grant applications.

2.15 The actual 'turnaround' times have been analysed based on two critical dates – the date the application was received and the date the decision was formally notified to the organisation/project. The results of this are set out as follows:

	Weeks (AV)
Grampian	11.1
Fife and Tayside	10.0
Lothian and Forth Valley	12.8
Scottish Borders	8.3
Dumfries and Galloway	9.7
Glasgow West	14.4

2.16 However, these figures are averages taken over the life of the programme to date. The trend of monthly turnaround times is also pertinent and this can be shown in graphic form as follows:



2.17 It can be observed that the processing time over the last few months has been maintained at an average of 12-14 weeks. It should be noted however, that the processing time includes the time taken for applications to respond to requests for additional information.

Performance Targets

2.18 In terms of progress against the programme targets, the table below provides details of the actual performance based on 20 projects that have been completed and partial returns for 12 other projects.

PI No.	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	TARGETS	ACTUALS
	Activities		
117	Number of people trained	1,700	1,032
111	Total number of beneficiaries receiving support	10,000	2,388
5B43	Number of women receiving support	6500	12
3E172	Number of organisation and management audits	50	0
112	Number of new systems developed/implemented	50	0
113	Number of networks supported	40	4
4B37	Number of beneficiaries trained in technical and management skills	250	32
	Results/Outcomes		
120	Number of people going into further education or training	1,250	16
118	Number of beneficiaries completing their courses	1,000	826
119	Number of people trained gaining a (part) qualification	650	38

2.19 It is evident from the information available, that the programme is likely to exceed a number of the targets given that the current level of performance is based only on the returns of 32 projects. A more detailed review of the overall performance will be undertaken within the final evaluation when more information will be available.

Section 3 – Evaluation Findings

Introduction

3.1 Based on the recommendations contained in the Interim Evaluation, a significant amount of work has been undertaken to address the issues in relation to the delivery of the programme. This has included:

- *Additional Promotional Work* – A range of additional promotional work has been undertaken to encourage uptake of the programme. This has included activity targeted towards those areas and group that had not been fully accessing the programme. Work has also been undertaken with the CVS Network to encourage local promotion and uptake.
- *Programme Efficiency* – A number of actions have been undertaken to improve the efficiency of the programme. This has included additional staffing and focussing of resources, increased process monitoring, and work refinements to the appraisal process such as acknowledging appraisals, tracking of application status, chasing outstanding appraisals, tracking of application status, chasing outstanding appraisals and determining applications at meetings.
- *Project Monitoring* – Arrangements have been finalised for project monitoring. This includes telephone interviews with completed projects to ensure the accurate reporting of outcomes, and to gather additional less quantifiable information.

3.2 It is evident from the evaluation that these adjustments have had an impact and that the programme is on schedule to meet the agreed targets.

Overall Progress

3.3 Significant progress has been made during the six-month period from June to December 2003. A total of 282 applications have been approved with 70% of the fund allocated. This figure increases to 95% by February 2004 when consideration is given to the applications that have been approved during January and the value of the applications that are pending.

3.4 It is obvious that a significant amount of effort has been made to improve the programme spend rate through additional promotional work and application processing.

Regional Performance

3.5 The variations within the different regions have tended to continue during the last six months in terms of level of uptake and level of awards. No notable exception has been recorded in relation to the regional variances.

Quality of Applications

3.6 The increased level of programme spend would not seem to have been achieved as a result of reduction in the quality threshold for projects. The level of approvals has remained constant in the majority of the regions during the last six months.

3.7 The main exception to this is in those areas where the areas of approval rate had been lower, and where the Interim Evaluation has suggested that this required to be considered. This had included Lothian and Forth Valley; Scottish Borders; and Dumfries and Galloway. The approval rates in these areas have been improved and are now closer to the regional average.

Processing Times

3.8 The improvement in processing times that had been noted within the Interim Evaluation has generally been maintained. The average processing time during the period June to December has been between 12-14 weeks. This is still out-with the target turnaround time of 8 weeks. However, as indicated earlier in the report, this time includes the delay encountered while waiting for applicants to respond to requests for further information.

3.9 It is recognised that work has been undertaken to improve the processing times and that further consideration will require to be given to this issue within any future programme.

Programme Outcomes

3.10 A total of 20 projects have now been completed and have submitted their final report providing information on outcomes. A further 12 projects have been completed and have provided partial information. Final reports are awaited from these projects. This represents 11.5% of the total number of applications approved.

3.11 Based on this information, it is clear that the programme is likely to exceed a number of the target sets in the business plan. A detailed review of the programme impact will form the basis of the final evaluation. This will be informed by the final reports submitted by all the projects and supplemented by a telephone interview to ensure that all of the relevant project outcomes have been captured.

Section 4 – Final Evaluation and Conclusion

Final Evaluation Arrangements

4.1 The timetable for the final stages of the programme is as follows:

- March 2004 – Anticipated date for allocation of Programme Funds
- September 2004 – Anticipated date for individual projects to be completed
- December 2004 – Anticipated date for return of monitoring forms by project and completion of telephone interviews.

4.2 The Final Evaluation will be undertaken during the period January – February 2005. The Final Evaluation will concentrate on the overall impact of the Direct Grants Programme against the original objectives and targets as set out in the business plan.

4.3 The Final Evaluation will also seek to gather information on the impact that the programme has had on the local communities. A post completion questionnaire has been designed that will be sent to projects after three months following the end of the grant. A copy of the questionnaire is attached as Appendix 1. The information obtained from the questionnaire will be used to inform the following:

- The level of community activity that has been sustained.
- The type of activity that has been developed.
- The extent to which other resources have been secured to support the ongoing development of local activity.
- The level of employment that has been sustained.
- The numbers of people that have progressed on to further education/training.

Conclusion

4.4 The Second Interim Evaluation highlights the progress that has been made since June 2003. The programme would now seem to be on schedule to meet its targets in relation to spend and projects assisted.

4.5 It is evident that a significant effort has been made to address the issues in relation to the delivery of the programme. This is reflected in the level of programme spend and in the relation to the overall performance.

4.6 The Final Evaluation will consider the overall impact of the programme against the agreed targets. It will also seek to examine the impact that the programme has had on local communities in terms of encouraging and developing sustainable community activity. The opportunity will also be taken to identify any lessons from the experience of the programme that should be considered in relation to the design of any future small grants scheme.

Direct Grants Programme Feedback Survey

This feedback survey is being undertaken by MCM Associates, independent consultants that have been appointed to carry out an evaluation of the Direct Grants Programme which is managed by SCVO.

This questionnaire is being sent to all organisations that have received a grant from the Programme. Its purpose is to discover how organisations have developed after the grant has come to an end.

Completion of the survey does not obligate you in anyway and details of your survey will remain confidential and will not be passed to any third party without your express consent.

It would be appreciated if you could take the time to complete the Questionnaire and return it to SCVO within two weeks of receiving it.

Please send the Questionnaire to SCVO for the attention of Nicola Wilson, Senior Administrator. The contact details are:

By e-mail	nicola.wilson@scvo.org.uk	
By fax		0141 248 8066
By post	SCVO, Freepost SC05496, Glasgow, G1 3BR	

Please note that this survey questionnaire is additional to any calls made by Marion Lacey or Diane Wilson at the end of the grant requesting information.

Thank you for the time taken to complete this survey – It should take no longer than 5 minutes.

MCM Associates.

Organisation Details:

Name of Organisation:

Project Reference:

Name of Person Completing Questionnaire

Position:

Phone No:

Questions:

1. Is the organisation still operating the project?

Yes

No

If No, please indicate the approximate date when the project was closed and a brief explanation for the closure.

2. Following the end of the Direct Grants Programme funding, has the organisation been able to continue at the same level of activity?

Yes

No

If No, please briefly describe how the services of the organisation have been reduced.

3. Has your funded project resulted in a new community enterprise being established?

Yes

No

Please briefly describe the reasoning behind your answer.

4. Has the experience of receiving the Direct Grants Programme grant helped the project to consider accessing larger sources of funding in order to grow its services within the community?

Yes

No

Please briefly describe the reasoning behind your answer.

5. Has the organisation been successful in obtaining alternative revenue grants to enable the continuation of its services in the community?

 Yes

 No

If Yes, please indicate the amount and sources:

Amount	£
Sources:	
Local Authority	
Scottish Enterprise	
Community Fund	
Sports Scotland	
New Opportunities Fund	
Social Inclusion Partnership	
Awards for All	
Communities Scotland	
Scottish Natural Heritage	
Scottish Arts Council	
Charitable Trusts/Foundation	
Europe – ESF/ERDF	
Other	

6. Following the end of the Direct Grants Programme funding, how many people that have undertaken training, have progressed onto further education/training?

7. Following the end of the Direct Grants Programme funding, how many people that have undertaken training completed the course?

8. Following the end of the Direct Grants Programme funding, how many people that have undertaken training, have secured employment?